

Panel: “CIA and the Cold War”

Katie Sherrod

Title: “Operation TPAJAX: The CIA’s First Power Trip”

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My name is **Katie Sherrod**. I am a history major with a political science minor. After graduating from IPFW, I plan to do some teaching and attend law school. History excites me because I enjoy learning about how certain issues affected our past, both nationally and globally, and how we can use the responses to those issues to learn and shape our responses to similar issues today. In my free time I enjoy reading and travelling.

Abstract

The CIA was originally established as an agency charged with putting together information from all other intelligence agencies. However, in the midst of the Cold War and with the election of President Eisenhower, a new role for the CIA surfaced. Across the globe, in Iran, in 1951 the people had elected a Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossaddegh, who opposed British control over Iranian oil fields. The exploitation of the Iranian oil fields by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (now British Petroleum) resulted in the Iranian people not receiving any of the money from these oil fields, and thus keeping the Iranian people in poverty. When Mossaddegh came to power in the 1950s, this had been going on for about 40 years. Mossaddegh and the people of Iran resented the British, and thus the Prime Minister took a stand. In a controversial move, he nationalized all of the Iranian oil fields, effectively kicking the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company out of Iran, along with much of the British influence. The British government owned a major stake in the company and sought to take swift retaliation, attempting to convince American allies to join in ousting the democratically-elected Prime Minister. As the current American President Truman applauded Mossaddegh, Britain failed to garner support from the United States. However, when Eisenhower subsequently became president in late 1952, the British government saw a chance and took it. After convincing Eisenhower of a Communist threat to Iran, Eisenhower allowed for the CIA to do what it had never done before: organize a *coup d’état*. The mission was simple— to get Mossaddegh out of power and to establish a pro-Western government. This paper explores the CIA’s role in the overthrow of the Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammad Mossaddegh, and the repercussions it had in the following years, both for the CIA and its mission, and in Iran itself.

Bibliographical Note

For this project, I used the CIA documents, declassified through the Freedom of Information Act, to understand what exactly happened in the operation and the events leading up to it. I also found a *Time* article from January of 1952 naming Mohammad Mossaddegh as the Man of the Year for 1951. This was especially interesting to me as it was a popular magazine and helped shape viewpoints across its readership. Kim Roosevelt also wrote a book about the operation and his

role in it. This source helped me to see how Roosevelt himself saw the situation, and how his view of events differed from those of the authors of my secondary sources.